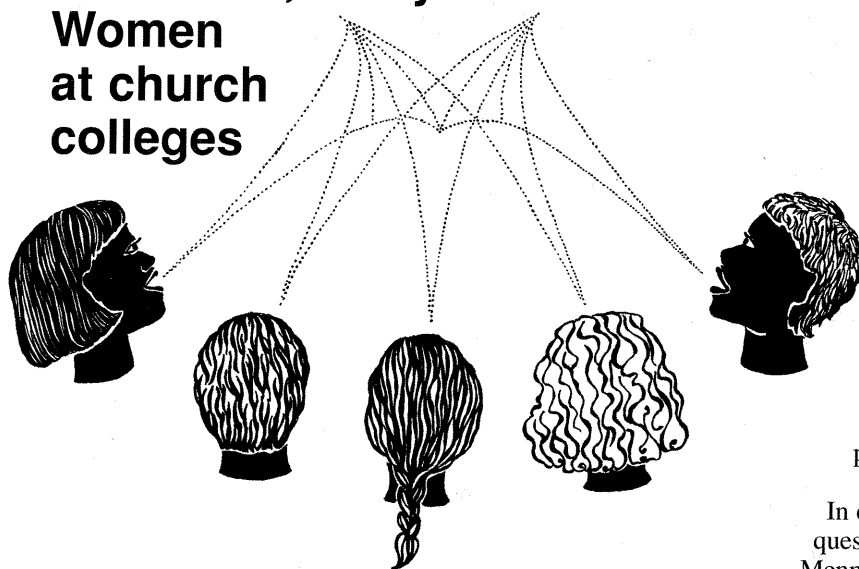




One voice, many voices: Women at church colleges



recently in relationships with guys, and it's wonderful to be able to talk about these things with someone who understands, even though she and I are from different sides of the world, and from completely different backgrounds.

When we finish the meal we get up, pay the bill, and leave the restaurant laughing and joking together. We're special friends, Elisabeth and I. She is an English major and I am a French major. We are so different, and so alike. And it's amazing that we ever met at all.

Many people have asked why I am at a Mennonite college. Non-Mennonites especially have trouble understanding what I find at a small, private college like Goshen. "You're intelligent," they say. "You could go anywhere, get a degree in anything you want. Why would you pick an obscure place like Goshen?"

In compiling this issue, I hope to answer some of those questions. The focus of this issue is "voices from the Mennonite colleges." Why do young women choose Mennonite colleges? What is it about Mennonite higher education that draws young people year after year?

This past Easter my sister and I invited our friend Tim Dueck to the house we shared with five other Goshen students. We had recently discovered that Tim shared our Russian Mennonite heritage, and decided to celebrate Easter with him. Together the three of us made *zwieback*, a Russian Mennonite bread we were all familiar with. We talked about how our grandparents and parents made *zwieback* and how our great-grandparents had come to the United States from Russia in the 1874 immigration, with wooden boxes full of *zwieback* to eat on the ship. We talked about things that only we as Russian Mennonites specifically could understand.

Tim is from Manitoba. My sister and I are from North Carolina. How amazing that we could become friends and share this special aspect of our lives together.

Being from a place like North Carolina where Mennonites are few and far-between, it was exhilarating for me to interact with Tim: someone who knew what I was talking about when I mentioned "606," or pasha, or made a joke about potlucks. Being Mennonite is part of my heritage. It's

"Sometimes I wish men were more like women," says Elisabeth Mocellin over won-ton soup and egg rolls. Then she laughs. "What a horrible thing to say. But you know what I mean? I look for a man who listens to me like a woman does—the way you are listening to me right now. I love my women friends. I wish I knew how to be friends with men too."

We both laugh. "I think I know what you're trying to say," I tell her. "I'm the same way. But is it fair to expect men to act like women?" I take a sip of green tea and look down into my soup. "What about in France? What's it like there?"

Elisabeth is a young woman from France who I met because we are both studying at Goshen (Ind.) College. "Much the same as here," she replies. "One gets involved with guys, and every time, one gets hurt." Her expression sober. "That has led me to realize: the more you suffer, the greater your capacity to love."

"The more you suffer, the greater your capacity to love." I repeat the words, marveling at the insight of this French woman; marveling that Elisabeth and I can have this conversation at all. We're not 100 percent serious. Of course neither of us are men-bashers. But we've both been hurt

"Pursuing Mennonite higher education allows me to raise my voice without screaming."

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT
USPS 367-790 is published bi-monthly
by MCC U.S. Women's Concerns, Box
500, 21 South 12th St., Akron, PA
17501-0500, fax 717-859-3875; and by
MCC Canada Women's Concerns, 50
Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1;
fax 519-745-0064.
POSTMASTER: Please send address
changes to Report, P.O. Box 500, Akron,
PA 17501-0500.

in my blood. Getting to know Mennonite young people who share my values is the most important reason why I am at a Mennonite college.

But there are many other reasons as well. In her poem in this issue, Carrie Snyder of Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ont., shares with us an experience she had in Nicaragua. She lived there in the fall of 1994 doing a field study as part of Conrad Grebel's Peace and Conflict Studies Program.

Amal Friesen of Goshen College wrote the poem "Sonnet," which takes us into the Costa Rica rain forest. Amal lived in Costa Rica for her Study Service Term, a Goshen requirement for all students.


Holly Ziegler, of Bluffton (Ohio) College, talks about cross-cultural experience within her own country. And I have already mentioned my friendships with Elisabeth, from France, and Tim, from Manitoba.

Going to Goshen provides me with cross-cultural experiences I couldn't get anywhere else. I experience my own Russian Mennonite culture, and I swap insights with friends from around the world. Next year I will study in France under the Goshen-affiliated Brethren Colleges Abroad program. The Study Service Term program provides a unique opportunity to study in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, People's Republic of China, Côte d'Ivoire or elsewhere.

There's no doubt about it. Pursuing Mennonite higher education offers completely unique experiences. It allows me to raise my voice without screaming; to hear my voice blend with the voices of those who are like me and those who are very different from me. To realize that my voice can mix with the voices of other women, but also of men; the voices of different cultures; the voices of Mennonites and non-Mennonites; the voices of those who have suffered, and those with great capacity to love. I am learning to hear the harmony in the voices of men, even when I have been hurt. I am learning to understand the languages of hundreds of different people who share a common bond: we are all at a Mennonite college.

You have heard my voice. Now let's hear some other voices.
—Sena Friesen, compiler

Sena Friesen lives in Winston-Salem, N.C., with her parents and siblings. She is a junior at Goshen College, studying languages. She is a contributing editor for *With* magazine, and her writing has appeared in such publications as *Discover* and *Teen Life*.

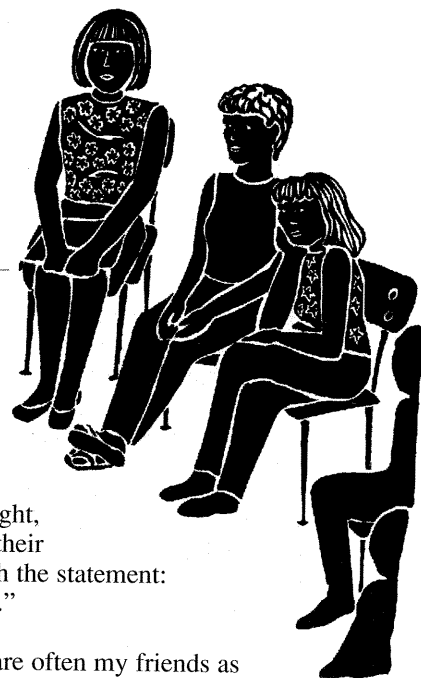


he's maybe thirteen this boy
i see, dressed seductively his child's
hips in tight jeans, flat chest in
a cut off shirt pink lipstick
and eye-liner
he is laughing as I pass him
our eyes meeting for a half-second
before I drop mine in shock
a child whore in the city
of managua
I can only walk on
remembering the sound of his
laughter, the slash of his lipstick
a wound behind my eyes
he's maybe thirteen, this boy i see

—by Carrie Anne Snyder.

Carrie Anne Snyder is a student at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ont. About this poem, Carrie says: "An estimated 20,000 children live on the street in Nicaragua's capital city, Managua. Child prostitution is only one of Nicaragua's many problems, most of which are caused, and exacerbated, by Nicaragua's economic misery. If you know some of Nicaragua's recent revolutionary history you might be surprised by how quickly all the pride and hard work of the 1980s has been swallowed by the apathy and depression (60% unemployment) of the 1990s; enforced poverty is a far more effective method than dictatorships ever were for keeping people submissive and apathetic."

"Just as all movements evolve, the feminist movement has evolved."



by Bryn Gribben

"I'm not a feminist, but . . .": The female undermining of feminism

Recently, I watched an episode of "Murphy Brown," in which Murphy returned to her alma mater. While there she attended a feminist issues class and was appalled by the divisive nature of the class dynamics.

One half of the women in the class seemed intent on condemning everything as patriarchal—from high heels to wanting to have a family. As for the other half of the class, well . . . A member of this latter group announced that she wanted equal pay for equal work, as well as a husband and family. "There," said Murphy triumphantly, "you have feminist concerns." "Oh," replied the young woman hurriedly, "I'm not a feminist."

At this point "Murphy Brown" met Bethel College. Bethel College, Newton, Kan., is an environment in which numerous social concerns are valued and discussed. It has a strong feminist population and is dedicated to equality and peace for both women and men. Lately, I have noticed

another faction of women on campus—a group of strong, bright, confident women who preface their defenses of women's rights with the statement: "No, I'm not a feminist, but . . ."

Why, I ask these women, who are often my friends as well as my peers, why do you feel the need to disassociate yourself from the term "feminist," when the last thing the feminist movement wants is to alienate you? The answers range from the understandable "I don't want to label myself" to the troubling "I don't hate men."

The first response I understand well, having once been a woman reluctant to belong to the campus feminist group. I had wondered whether such groups actually served to segregate rather than unite women and men. I knew that I had always been a feminist; as a child, I protested my elementary school classmates' continual dispute as to the superiority of one gender over another. "I think they're both equal," I interjected once. Needless to say, this did not endear me to any on the playground, where choosing sides is three-fourths of acceptance.

My mother affirmed my egalitarian ideals. Actually, she instilled them. The women to be admired, in my mother's eyes, were those who were true to themselves, who respected their own personal goals and acted on them: Katherine Hepburn, Isadora Duncan, Virginia Wolf and Murphy Brown. I considered the number of silenced women's voices in society: battered women, women of low self-esteem, talented women who are told, as in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, that "women can't write and women can't paint." I joined Bethel's women's issues group, Sappho, in my sophomore year and decided that unity is only fair (and true) when all sides have a voice that is heard.

At an English senior seminar presentation late last spring, a friend of mine passionately disagreed with the presenter's assertion that women gained power through manipulation in Shakespeare. She began her defense with "I'm not a feminist, but . . ." This woman is a divorcee who is working her way through college, as well as being involved in campus activities and the careful raising of her children.



"Women must be aware not only of their roles in reshaping but in the possibility of their unconscious destruction of feminist goals."

How could she be opposed to the term "feminist" when that group is supposed to be exactly the group that should most support her actions?

I believe this demonstrates the need for the distinction between second- and third-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism was headed by Gloria Steinem and company and was the period of feminism in which separation from men was emphasized as essential to the development of women's equality. If women could be viewed as independent of men, perhaps then their needs for financial and employment independence would be taken seriously. This distinction announced dissatisfaction with the patriarchal system that subverted women's needs. It announced that feminism declared women equal to and not in addition to men.

Just as all movements evolve, the feminist movement has evolved. The second wave of feminism was essential to the re-establishment of women's rights. The first wave, which resulted in the Nineteenth Amendment, did much to establish the foundation for later waves. The 1990s have seen, however, the rise of a new generation of feminists—the children of supermoms, the young women who are, in effect, the third wave.

I am personally grateful to be a woman right now. It seems that the efforts of the second wave did not completely fail with the ERA. The idea of women's equality is more firmly entrenched in the American mind set, although not firmly enough. The famed peace lecturer and teacher Coleman McCarthy tells of a class in which he asked his students: "Why do female students seem to grasp the concepts of peace more readily than male students?" A female student approached him after class with this response: "Mr. McCarthy, women understand peace better because they are more often the victims of violence." A woman is still more likely to be killed in her own home, by someone she knows, than on the street by a stranger. How can women not support a movement that has as a main goal the cessation of such violence?

Third-wave feminists have the benefit of a society in which concern for women's rights is on the increase. They also have the opportunity to make these rights a matter of course, rather than the exceptions to the rule. The greatest challenge the new generation of feminists face, I feel, is the

redefinition of "feminism" to include "femininity," as well as the redefinition of "femininity." The femininity some third wavers accuse the second wavers of having forfeited, in order to be more competitive, is no longer acceptable—a femininity based on silence and submission. Nor can the new definition exclude the need for love and human connection with either gender—feminist rights are, after all, human rights.

With the reshaping of cultural attitudes, women must be aware not only of their roles in reshaping but in the possibility of their unconscious destruction of feminist goals. The greatest threat to the continued growth of respect for women's rights is posed by women themselves. Those women who publicly disavow the feminist label negate the work of feminism to empower women with greater credibility. I am not saying that all women must label themselves as "feminists" if they are not comfortable with the label. To verbally denounce the label, however, is to announce that "even women don't want to be feminists," thus perpetuating the segregationist attitude and significantly harming the value of the label for those who do use it. In this way intolerance is created. This is much like the religious intolerance created when one religious system puts down another. To say that "I'm not a Christian, but I believe in peace" is to imply that Christians have exclusive ownership of peace. To claim pride in women's experiences but to renounce the feminist movement is an irreconcilable paradox.

I ask then that feminism be examined in the light of present-day culture, in the light of its changes, so that it may continue to offer light to all who seek it. I ask that those who shun its name at least recognize its part in their growth. After all, feminism, like the inclusivity it promotes, surrounds and includes us all, even in the process of negation.

Bryn Gribben is a recent Bethel College graduate with a double-major in English and communication arts. She plans to attend graduate school, working towards master's and doctorate degrees in cultural studies.



by Holly Ziegler

Set no limits

No, I am not a Mennonite. I have been asked that question often in the last few months. But considering my life right now, it seems very possible that I could be a Mennonite. I attend Bluffton (Ohio) College, take part in many religious life activities, and am an active member of the Peace Club and Habitat for Humanity. My best friend is Mennonite, I work with several Mennonite faculty members, and I babysit for Mennonites.

The peculiar thing is that until two years ago, I did not know any Mennonites. The only thing I did know about the Mennonite faith in fall 1994 was that it was a Christian denomination. Since then I have learned lots of information about Mennonites; I can even identify some Mennonite surnames!

More importantly, I have discovered that I identify with many Mennonite beliefs, namely pacifism, as well as an active faith and social justice. Surprisingly, there is one aspect of my beliefs that has received some dirty looks. These gestures have not come from faculty members, but from Bluffton students who tend to be somewhat conservative. What I am speaking of is the fact that I am a feminist.

The mention of this certain “f” word in conversation often brings out the jeer of “You mean those feminazi-politically-correct-freaks?”

Well, no.

The difference between the feminism I harbor and that radical feminism is like the difference between Lassie and a pit bull. Which one would you prefer your eight-year-old to

“I do not think these two women, or any women, should have to fight for equal rights.”

play with?! I believe my feminism is the Lassie kind. I am not sure where the radical pit bull feminism comes from, but my Lassie kind came from the two most influential people in my life—my grandmother and my mother.

My grandmother, Nan as we called her, was born in 1921 and was the second of 12 children. She worked at a young age cleaning and babysitting to help with family expenses. At age 17 Nan dropped out of school to get married, and my mom was born a year later. The economy took out its rage on everyone, and my grandfather’s paychecks were made smaller by his stops at the local bar. My uncle was born seven years after my mom, and by the time he was two, Nan had had enough.

She and my grandfather separated. Nan worked full time, sewed and baked to support my mom and uncle. A divorce was finally granted five years after the separation, but because of two lawyers lacking integrity, my grandfather was able to sign off all his rights as a father, including any financial obligation. So Nan raised her children on her own. They never fit into the perfect family image, but they made it.

Then, for the last six years of Nan’s life she fought a battle with cancer. I lived with her for the last four years of her life. I was often frustrated with her seemingly pessimistic view of life, but I guess it came from her having to kick, scratch and fight her whole way through. I know she deserved more credit than I ever gave her, and more honor than the world ever gave.

My mom was married to my dad for 29 years and 14 of them were without me. Mom loved my father, but for years he took her for granted, kept things from her, and in the end quit speaking to her completely. Finally, on July 7, 1991, Mom and I moved out and moved in with Nan—from an old farmhouse to the heart of a town of 19,000. We became a household of three women. My mom, who had been a housewife for 15 years since I was born, went out and got a job to support us. She was 52. She still has the same job today. It is not a great job, but it pays the bills. Mom loves me more than anything, and I do not believe I could ever do enough to repay her.

I do not think these two women, or any women, should have to fight for equal rights. Anyone, female or male, can accomplish what they set their minds to. Women can teach, preach, labor, farm or govern, if that is what they want to do. No one has to prove this to me; I know. I just wish other

"I took a Women's Studies class and realized that here was something with which I could connect in a very powerful way."

people were sure about women's capabilities. I hold no malice towards men, although I seldom claim to understand them.

I come from a line of strong women of which I am very proud. I do not think I should be accused of being a pit bull for that. I hope to continue the feminist tradition in a different way. I will be the first of this line of women to graduate from a four-year college.

Thank you, Nan. Thank you, Mom. I love you both.

Holly Ziegler, of Tiffin, Ohio, is a junior at Bluffton College. She is a resident advisor, and is pursuing bachelor's degrees in Spanish and history.

Flight of Love

It was raining for a long, long time,
But we sat through it you and I.
When the rain left us cold and bleak,
And the storm was making us weak,
We decided to fly away,
And leave the storm that summer day.

We flew not so far from there,
To a place where we have no cares.
Now the sun shines brightly each day,
And I look to you and long to say,
Thank you with all my heart,
I knew we could do it from the start.
So the rain will return never,
And we are released forever.
But the words will never do,
To show my eternal love for you.

—by Holly Ziegler

Holly wrote this poem and gave it to her mother February 14, 1992. This was their first Valentine's Day after the move, and also the birthday of Holly's father.

by Linda Marie Gerber

Womyn's words

This past spring I graduated from Goshen (Ind.) College with a degree in English. This was not my intention when I began my college career four years ago. Goshen did not offer an international development program, which is what I originally wanted to study. I chose to attend Goshen College based on the fact that my sister was having a good experience there and I was ready to distance myself from my hometown, almost 900 miles away. I assumed I would have my fun at Goshen and then transfer to a different school where I would buckle down and begin solving the world's problems.

After my first year at college I spent a very difficult summer at home. I could not find full-time work, most of my friends were gone, and I was not proud of my academic performance. I thought a lot about finding a new college so I could give myself a new start. However, I had agreed to edit the feature page of the Goshen publication, the GC Record, that fall and I wanted to follow through on my agreement.

I returned to Goshen with the attitude that I needed to apply myself as I knew I could, and I decided to explore the Women's Studies department because it sounded interesting. I took a Women's Studies class and realized that here was something with which I could connect in a very powerful way. I found I could combine my personal concerns and thoughts about being a womyn with my academics.

I had always considered myself a feminist and often got into very loud arguments concerning womyn's rights prior to college. When I began to study feminism, I realized how much more I needed to know before I could defend my emotional convictions. Realizing that I was at a college where I could learn more about feminism pleased me immensely. I found a niche that kept me at Goshen. It was an area of study that challenged me politically and intellectually, and I could pursue it from within the context of a Mennonite college.

Since then I became an English major with my primary focus being feminism, feminist studies, womyn's literature and womyn in literature. I realize that at times I limited my study of literature as a whole because I narrowed my focus

so much. However, I would not trade the excitement I felt as I delved into layers of Toni Morrison's fiction or examined the social place of womyn in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* for the traditional literary canon, which seems to have little place for the female experience. I am very grateful to my English professors because they allowed me the room to explore literature from the perspective with which I am most interested. Never was I asked to alter my focus in any way.

The words and actions of other womyn are immeasurably important to me. I find comfort in the knowledge that the patriarchal system has been challenged for all of history, even if by just a few people at any given time. I have been inspired to challenge myself and work for change. Women's Studies has introduced me to a wealth of ideas; literature has compounded those ideas with stories and experiences.

One Women's Studies class, "Women and Cultures of the U.S.," stands out as a highlight of my experience in this program. Shirley Showalter, now president of Goshen College, taught the class in the winter of 1995. In it she combined womyn's history with womyn's literature, using her passion for both topics to challenge us to do much more than simply read the material and attend the class. Through group presentations, student and professor lectures and research projects, we combined the spiritual aspects of womynhood with the academic history and literature that is consistently ignored or overlooked in traditional history texts.

One of my most poignant memories is of the evening two sisters, Jennifer Larson and Karin Larson Krisetya, sang several African-American spirituals as a part of a group presentation on female slave narratives. I, too, was in the group who was presenting and as tears gathered in my eyes I looked at the rest of the class and realized others also had tears in their eyes. Never before had I experienced a class where the rigid boundaries of academia and emotion had been so blurred, bringing together the two opposing experiences into a sense of wholeness.



I suppose my experience in that class serves as a metaphor for the idea of womyn's studies as a whole. The motive is to combine womynhood with the academic, the spiritual

with the concrete. Two halves come together, creating a whole. To my surprise, this experience happened at Goshen College, the place where I originally anticipated having little more than a short social experience. Instead, I found what no admissions viewbook can convey: a program that allowed me to tailor my studies to my interests, combining womynhood with academia. I also was able to study under several extremely interesting and inspiring professors. One of them, Judith Davis, challenged me to dig deeper into literature and my experience to look for common patterns. She also showed me how important it is to live by one's convictions.

In looking back on my four years at Goshen College, I realize how far I am from having the answers to solve the world's problems. I am still very cynical and I struggle with issues both inside and outside the Mennonite Church, which keep me from accepting what I have been told and raised to believe as truth. My study at a Mennonite college has helped me sort through some of the crucial issues of my generation, but it has not provided me with answers. I have, however, found a subject area in which I know I will find personal strength and the motivation to at least continue searching for the right ways to ask the questions. I am grateful to Goshen College for implementing and maintaining a Women's Studies program, because I firmly believe it is what kept me at a Mennonite institution.

Linda Gerber of Hesston, Kan., graduated from Goshen College in May 1996 with a major in English and a minor in women's studies. Her post-graduate plans include working at the Oaklawn Hospital for the mentally challenged in Goshen and investigating the Americorps program, a government-run domestic voluntary service program.



by Kristen Margaret Mathies

Shout, whisper, sing, cry, laugh

I guess during university is when I got mine. My voice, that is. Or maybe I had it all along; it just needed the volume turned up so that I wasn't the only one who could hear it.

Silence

I started my undergraduate degree excited and relieved to have a place like Conrad Grebel College in Ontario to go to. Being one anonymous face among some 20,000 University of Waterloo students would have been just plain depressing without the much smaller Grebel community to which I belonged. It seemed other Grebelites generally understood what I was about; most were Christians, many were Mennonites. We could relate. My friends were great, classes were good, and there was a lot of fun stuff to get involved in.

The community included students, faculty and staff: people of diverse backgrounds, interests and personalities, and the mix was amazing. Chapel services, classes and talks with other students brought up all kinds of issues important to me, and some I'd barely thought of. Dialogue was generally open; people could disagree completely but usually listened to each other (it was difficult to dismiss the opinion of someone who had prayed with you in chapel or seen you drool toothpaste all over yourself at the bathroom sink).

But there were a few issues over which people didn't remain quite so calm or open-minded. One of these was gender equality. I came to Grebel as a somewhat apologetic feminist, believing strongly in the equality of women and men but being aware of the negative perceptions many people had upon hearing the word "feminist." I was always quick to point out that this scary term (the *other* f-word, judging by some people's reactions to it) simply referred to people who believed in and worked towards equality of women and men. And yes, guys could be feminists too!

Studying and talking about issues of equality helped me to articulate the reasons behind my beliefs. The college community was a great environment for this learning—I had never before been around a group of people, other than my



"Studying and talking about issues of equality helped me to articulate the reasons behind my beliefs."

immediate family and closest friends, who generally acknowledged the existence of Christian feminism and saw it as a positive thing! I was pushed and affirmed in student leadership, had strong female role models among the faculty, staff and other students, and took courses in which I researched

papers on such topics as God as Mother, the position of women in the Mennonite Brethren church, the portrayal of women in our conference periodical, and Jesus' life as a feminist. At Grebel I received encouragement to develop my strengths, and a sense of the achievements and potential of women in general, that I had not (as a woman, and a young one at that) received in the larger church community before.

New as well was the theological space I saw being rediscovered for the experience of women. Hearing God referred to as "She" in chapel for the first time may seem a small detail, but it made me deliriously happy! The inclusive spirit of chapels allowed me the freedom to do the same, though with considerable anxiety about offending those not open to the idea. Much of my learning was supported by friends and other students who were either thinking through the same questions, or had done so previously and were further ahead in their spiritual journeys.

A women's group was also a source of encouragement, and a place to discuss ideas that weren't necessarily welcome elsewhere. We had many fascinating discussions of Christianity and feminism, but we also just hung out, watched movies, ate together, did artwork, read stories, vented frustrations (we searched in vain for the verse that says women must make jello salad for potlucks while men run the church), and laughed a lot. Though many of the group members considered themselves feminists, that was not the focus of the group. I found it unfortunate to discover later that some people had been scared off by the name "Women's Group," assuming it to be a radical, anti-male gathering!

Cacophony

I began to experience a growing discomfort with certain opinions about women, and more specifically feminism, which I heard expressed. The fact that Grebel was such a positive, caring place, including and challenging its male and female students, made the few negative voices stand out

"It was difficult to remain open to what others were saying when you knew they considered you theologically out of whack."



in sharp relief. I was unprepared for the reaction of those students whose theology I considered overly conservative. Though I really enjoyed the diversity of thought at Grebel, I expected a certain amount of openness and respect for differing opinions and the contributions of all members of the community. After all, I reasoned, the student body was composed of young, educated people who would be eager to hear new

opinions and articulate their own. Besides, most people were Christians; surely a certain measure of peaceful tolerance in disagreement could be maintained.

This was not always the case. Chapel services that were inspiring to some offended others, who felt threatened by the new ideas being presented. The opinion board, where articles and comments were posted, provided a forum for interesting and thoughtful discussion, but also a place for angry and derisive retorts. Most of the late-night talks sparked by the comments were challenging and encouraging, focusing on various aspects of women's roles in and contributions to the church, women and theology, and the female nature of God. People went away with new ideas and respect for those with whom they disagreed, having been encouraged to articulate their own thoughts. A few, however, lashed back at any idea that was unfamiliar to their own experience.



I was surprised at the anger of those who disagreed with giving women and men equal opportunities (in the church, that is; few found sexism palatable for the secular world). It seemed that power, whatever the label, was being jealously guarded for fear that women would overstep their bounds. Referring to Mother God freed many people to worship more fully, or at least consider the potential in this image; it also brought expressions of shock and disgust at the supposed defilement of God the Father. It was frustrating to know that while your opinions might be respected by most people, a few others were silently invalidating everything you said because, after all, you were one of "those feminists." It was difficult to remain open to what others were saying when you knew they considered you theologically out of whack.

Harmony

I can't pinpoint the exact moment at which I felt free to experiment with my voice. After all, Grebel *was* an overwhelmingly positive experience, during which I did some of my most significant learning thus far, and strengthened some of my closest friendships. It wasn't as if I had all kinds of negative debris to wade through. However, the tough stuff I did run into caused me to examine more closely the basis for my feminism, even my Christianity. In doing so, I began to own my faith, supported by but not influenced strictly by the various circles in which I moved. Maybe I would have learned to shout, sing, whisper, cry and laugh my faith elsewhere; certainly some aspects of my Grebel experience helped me do so.

My passion for Christian feminism has been strengthened and invigorated. I can articulate what I think and I want to keep learning. Now when I hear a sexist or theologically narrow remark, I'm less likely to be crushed. Now I can approach it as a challenge—see how one eyebrow lifts and I lean forward to make sure I understand? I know God values all Her children equally. I know He wants us to work for peace and justice in all situations. God is loving father, strong mother, and wise friend; God listens to, advises and helps me articulate the voice that is my faith. My voice may change from a shout to a whisper, from song to lament or a cry to a laugh; but it is always alive.



Kristen Mathies did her undergraduate studies in English literature at the University of Waterloo, of which Conrad Grebel is a college. She recently finished a graduate degree in education.

Sonnet

We waited for the rain and watched the sky
With mud and water sucking at our boots.
Mahogany and rosewood twisted high;
Thick walls of wood rose up from shallow roots.
The air was warm and silent, wet and still;
The light was rainy green and cloudy grey.
We slid and scrambled down a muddy hill
And found the path and traveled on our way.
Suddenly loud—a cracking, breaking tree
Behind the wild, tangled jungle wall
As deadwood weighted
down with rain fell free.
We heard the crash but
never saw it fall.
The stillness sank around us
once again.
We watched the sky and
waited for the rain.

—by Amal Friesen



Amal Friesen graduated from Goshen College on May 19, 1996, with a degree in biology and environmental studies. She is currently doing an internship in environmental education at Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies. This poem is from a study term Amal did in Costa Rica.

Letter

Thank you for your latest edition of *Report* [on Women in Midlife]. I was greatly refreshed, encouraged and nourished by the articles, especially “Embracing change,”

“Discovering silent listening prayer,” and “The compelling forces of midlife.” I can’t tell you how excited I was to find someone articulating what I am thinking and feeling!

—Doreen Hodges, Victoria, B.C.

Upcoming themes

Following are themes scheduled for issues of the *Women's Concerns Report* in coming months. We welcome suggestions for contributors for these issues:

- Eating disorders
- Hispanic women's stories
- Women in non-traditional lifestyles
- Spirituality of older women
- Menses rituals
- Working at race, class and gender

Women in ministry

Louise Wideman was ordained April 28 at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, Kan.

Bonnie and Chuck Neufeld are associate pastors at Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

Gary and Margaret Ewen Peters were ordained May 19 as pastors at Hanley (Sask.) Mennonite Church.

Book review:

Faces from our history

Mennonite Women of Lancaster County: A story in photographs from 1855–1935, by Joanne Hess Siegrist (Good Books, Intercourse, Pa., 1996, 220 pages)

This book drew me in from the moment I opened it—all those wonderful photographs that looked like ones from the photo album my mother has of her few years as a young adult in Lancaster, Pa. Pictures of women in plain clothes and in Victorian clothes, of women walking and working, quilting and talking, at home and traveling. I especially loved the pictures of “girl crowds”—of groups of young women together for conversation and friendship.

I recommend this book for the photographs. The more than 200 photos are all accompanied by brief captions and an occasional longer story. Much is left unsaid in this book; one wishes for more about the inner world of these women, about their family stories, about their personal histories. But much is also shared through the moving faces that are pictured.

The author is a 10th generation Pennsylvanian, who grew up on a family farm in Lancaster County. The book is also interesting for the story of how she began collecting photos, and her advice to others who want to gather history through collecting photographs.

Reviewed by Tina Mast Burnett, Akron, Pa.

News and verbs

- Gwen Groff of Lancaster, Pa., is new MCC U.S. Women's Concerns director, and **new editor of Women's Concerns Report**. She takes the place of Tina Mast Burnett, beginning in September. Gwen has worked for five years in the MCC Overseas Peace Office and is a student at Lancaster Theological Seminary.
- Iris de Leon Hartshorn has been named **director of MCC U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries**. She takes the place of Titus and Linda Gehman Peachey, who shared the position the past eight years.
- Lara Hall of Scottdale, Pa., is the new **executive secretary of WMSC** (Women's Missionary and Service Commission). She replaces Marian Hostettler.
- “**Responding to Clergy Misconduct**” was the theme of a conference held September 5 to 7 at Des Moines (Iowa) Mennonite Church. Sponsors were MBCM (MC), East Central States Ad Hoc Committee on Clergy Abuse (MC/GC), Northern District Conference (GC), Ministerial Leadership Office (GC), MCC Women's Concerns, Mennonite Conciliation Service, and Schowalter Foundation.
- **Mary Brubaker-Zehr** is new dean of students at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ont.
- Lydia Harder is **director of Toronto (Ont.) Mennonite Theological Centre**.
- Melanie Zuercher has been appointed **assistant editor of The Mennonite**, the General Conference periodical.
- “The Experience of **Ibero-American Anabaptist Women**” was a paper presented by Juanita Nuñez of Apopka, Fla., at the First Encounter of Ibero-American Anabaptists in North America, held in Miami in May. Men's and women's roles was a lively topic at this first gathering of North American Hispanic Anabaptists.

(continued on page 12)



Illustrations in this issue were drawn by Teresa Pankratz of Chicago. Please do not reproduce without permission.

- An informal consortium of Mennonite **historical societies** invites papers and proposals to an upcoming conference, "One People, Many Stories: Comparing Mennonite Experience in the United States and Canada through the Twentieth Century." The conference will be October 23 to 25, 1997, in British Columbia. Papers and proposals are due in January 1997. For information contact planning committee co-chair Perry Bush, Bluffton

College, 280 W. College Ave., Bluffton OH 45817; tel: 419-358-3278; e-mail: BushP@Bluffton.edu.

- "Darling Little Girl: A sexual abuse survivor sings" is a new cassette tape by Jenny Schrag of Kansas. All songs were written by Schrag, who is accompanied on the tape by musicians Doug and Jude Krehbiel. Tapes are available from Faith and Life Bookstore, 724 Main St., Newton, KS 67114; tel: 316-283-2210.

We welcome your submissions to "News and verbs." This column features a wide variety of news about the interests and activities of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women. We welcome news about groups and individuals.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is published bimonthly by the MCC Committees on Women's Concerns. We believe that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committees strive to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures through which women and men can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committees on Women's Concerns.

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT is edited by Kristina Mast Burnett. Layout by Beth Oberholtzer.

Subscription cost is \$12 U.S./\$15 Cdn. for one year or \$20 U.S./\$25 Cdn. for two years. Send all subscriptions, correspondence and address changes to Editor, MCC Women's Concerns, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500; telephone 717-859-3889; fax 717-859-3875. Canadian subscribers may pay in Canadian currency.

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

2nd Class

**POSTAGE
PAID**

at Akron, PA

21 South 12th Street
PO Box 500
Akron, PA
17501-0500